

sporadically between the Eastern Ghats and Satpura Hills. March 27, 1999

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15. TREE PIE (*DENDROCITTA VAGABUNDA*) IN THE ARID THAR DESERT

In January 1998, while studying the Houbara bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* in the Thar desert of Rajasthan, we visited Dhanana, about 110 km west of Jaisalmer city. Dhanana is an extremely arid area with sand dunes all around. Large trees, except for a few khejri *Prosopis cineraria* trees, are absent. Beyond this village there is no human habitation, as it is close to the international border. There was a small Border Out Post (BOP) of the Border Security Force, atop a large sand dune. In the BOP area, there were three neem trees (*Azadirachta indica*). We reached Dhanana at about 1330 hrs, the temperature was about 36 °C. We were surprised to see a tree pie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* on one of the neem trees. This bird has not been reported here earlier.

The tree pie is usually found in forest plantations, secondary jungle, cultivation, human

habitation, and gardens (Ali and Ripley 1983). Owing to the development of the Indira Gandhi Nahar Project and agriculture in the Thar desert, tremendous changes are taking place in the avifaunal composition of the Thar (Rahmani 1997). New forest birds can now be seen in the plantations developed on either side of the canal. However, Dhanana is located at least 150 km from the nearest canal plantation. Therefore, its presence in this extremely arid region is worth recording.

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